

RELEASED IN PART B6

ACTION EUR-00

INFO LOG-00 NP-00 AID-00 CIAE-00 INL-00 DOEE-00 PERC-00
 SRPP-00 DS-00 OIGO-00 VC-00 TEDE-00 INR-00 IO-00
 LAB-01 L-00 VCE-00 M-00 AC-01 NSAE-00 OIC-02
 OMB-01 OPIC-01 PA-00 PC-01 PM-00 PRS-00 ACE-00
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C O N F I D E N T I A L TBILISI 001458

DEPT FOR EUR/CACEN
 E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/01/2013
 TAGS: PGOV, PREL, GG
 SUBJECT: GEORGIA: "KMARA" MOBILIZES FOR NOVEMBER
 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

REF: Tbilisi 01109

Classified by Ambassador Richard Miles, reasons 1.5
 (b, d).

1. (C) Summary. Fledgling student opposition movement "Kmara" (enough!) has attracted widespread public, media and Georgian Government attention in recent weeks. Poloff recently met with Kmara activists at their temporary headquarters in the offices of NGO Liberty Institute to discuss Kmara's structure, recent activities, and plans for the future. Following the meeting, poloff explored Kmara's plans for future political action with activist [REDACTED]. Activists boosted Kmara to new heights with a June 13 action at the Ministry of Internal Affairs that culminated in their detention and a wider protest demanding their release. Kmara, which represents a legitimate point of view, is not the vanguard of grass roots rebellion against the Shevardnadze Government as some Georgian NGOs have suggested. End summary.

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REVIEW AUTHORITY: Robert Homme, Senior Reviewer

 BACKGROUND

2. (C) With resource support from Non-Governmental Organizations including the Liberty Institute, Georgian Young Lawyers Association (GYLA), and Open Society-Georgia Foundation (OSGF), Kmara's leadership has managed to organize itself over the past month into an ad hoc executive council. Claiming their origin from anti-corruption campaigns in Georgian universities in 1998, these present and former students aim to transform their five-year relationship into a politically motivated youth opposition movement. Kmara's Tbilisi-based leadership began establishing Kmara in universities in December of 2002. Subsequently, they have been banned from organizing on university grounds. Since its public debut organizing a demonstration outside the State Chancellery on April 14, 2003, Kmara has coordinated a few opportunistic demonstrations with formal opposition parties, extending its nominal membership to about 30 cities and towns around Georgia. Kmara's hard core, by its own estimation, is some 40 students at Tbilisi State University.

3. (C) A handful of Kmara members participated in a study program in Serbia where they researched the OTPOR student resistance movement against the Milosevic government. Kmara members say they received activist training there, independent of the study program and that it was rudimentary in scope. The students express a desire to learn more in terms of student mobilization and demonstration tactics. Kmara claims to have no official political affiliation, but clearly sides with opposition parties in calling for the removal of the current GoG administration. In regard to political autonomy, university student [] says, "We do not want political parties to come to us; instead we will go to them."

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4. (C) As for NGO assistance, Kmara members trace the movement's development principally from Soros' OSGF, and currently receive resource assistance from the Liberty Institute and legal support from GYLA. Although Kmara has tapped into various resources while under the wings of these NGOs, no official funding has been directly allocated to the movement, which is in fact not officially registered as an organization. Kmara activists maintain that individual members' funding of paints and banners is sufficient for their actions. The students deny any efforts to seek further financial assistance or develop a formal organizational structure to

accommodate their growing popularity. Kmara agrees that the elusive and ad hoc nature of the movement aids it in avoiding legal complications with the GoG

while maintaining "uncompromising" relationships with Western NGOs.

5. (C) At a recent meeting with poloff, the unofficial Kmara leadership of 5 students identified themselves, distinct from the rest of the group. They spoke emotionally regarding the controversy surrounding their organization, claiming that Kmara is "an expression of the general will of the Georgian people." They were quick to mention that the means by which they express their political dissent are peaceful and within the bounds of the Georgian Constitution. However, they maintained that their actions would continue to focus around spray-painting "Kmara!" ("enough!") on public property, particularly Government buildings. As to whether their actions are constructive, they opined that any action provoking responses from the Georgian people, whether negative or positive, is essential in stimulating dialogue on the upcoming elections. Unconcerned with Kmara's public image, activists boast that recent GoG actions and conspiracy theories advanced by pro-Government New Georgia bloc spokesperson Irina Sarishvili-Chanturia have increased Kmara's membership and afforded the group wide media coverage. The leadership claims the support of various sectors of Georgian society which do not wish to be publicly associated with Kmara, but rather quietly offer support to the students.

6. (C) The Kmara leadership eagerly gave poloff its account of the demonstration and subsequent detention at the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MOIA) on the night of June 12. They said that demonstrations outside of the Chancellery and MOIA evolved from an incident in Sagarejo, a small city east of Tbilisi, on June 5. While painting "Kmara!" on the local police station in Sagarejo, 4 Tbilisi-based Kmara activists and some local students were confronted by the local police. The police took the paint and poured it on some of the students. Scuffling and quarreling ensued, but none of the students were arrested. In response, Interior Minister Koba Narchemashvili reportedly admonished the authorities for not detaining the students on the charge of hooliganism in Sagarejo. In a direct attempt to challenge Narchemashvili, Kmara intentionally led its demonstration from the Chancellery to the Interior Ministry on June 12. Once Kmara members began painting slogans on the

building, Minister Narchemashvili ordered the detention of 8 students on grounds of hooliganism. GYLA, OSGF, and Liberty Institute representatives arrived to demand the release of the students. With the help of opposition party leaders and supporters, the demonstration blocked the road outside the Interior Ministry, demanding the students' release.

7. (C) One student who was detained claims that he was taken to a special room where guards confiscated his wallet and cell phone. He accused guards of threatening him with pictures of torture victims, as well as telling him that he would be blindfolded and beaten if he did not disclose Kmara's "secret financial ties." The GoG claims that Kmara members are bankrolled to the tune of USD 500 by independent sources for every action carried out. After seven hours of detention the students were released from the Interior Ministry. Tina Khidasheli of GYLA filed a lawsuit on behalf of Kmara against Narchemashvili for unlawfully detaining the students. The students were fined GEL 8 (less than USD 4) for the unlawful demonstration. In response to allegations that opposition parties incited the students to demonstrate, United Democrats leader Zurab Zhvania declared "I will always stand by these kids." Immediately after their release, the detained students were interviewed by Rustavi-2 TV during a half-hour special. The incident reflects growing tension between Kmara and the GoG, which is

looking for avenues to control Kmara's actions while downplaying its public image. The GoG has also asserted close ties between Kmara and opposition parties, despite the students' claims that they receive no orders or financial assistance.

8. (C) Poloff continued discussion with university student and [REDACTED] following the appearance of Kmara graffiti on the new Courtyard Marriott hotel, National Bank of Georgia, and Tbilisi State University. Discovered the morning of June 14, the graffiti provoked further controversy surrounding Kmara's actions, characterized by widespread public disapproval of the property damage inflicted, and resulted in an investigation by the GoG. Kmara activists deny any association with the June 14 paintings, claiming to only paint public property as a matter of principle. [REDACTED] accused Kmara's opponents of trying to jeopardize the student movement by provoking harsh GoG and public reactions.

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9. (C) Subsequent discussions between poloff and [REDACTED] focused on Kmara's future actions. The

unofficial leadership body has organized an activist training camp for June 30-July 3 in Tskhvarichamia, a small town outside of Tbilisi (septe). In two separate sessions, Kmara will gather students from around Georgia for consensus building meetings and activist training lessons. From these meetings, Kmara will draft the final version of its "manifesto" to be released to the public. An immediate action planned for the week of June 30 is the planting of flowers in the shape of "Kmara" along the city sidewalks in Tbilisi in response to the widely condemned June 14 paintings. Kmara is looking to improve its public image by embarking on more constructive means of displaying its message. [] says that "get fit" programs for the elderly and literacy activism campaigns in the schools are also planned by Kmara.

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10. (C) Comment. Kmara is not entirely a function of NGOs or opposition political parties, nor is it a purely grass roots student movement. Kmara activists maintain that it is autonomous, but do not disguise Kmara's dependence on the guidance and moral and material support of the NGO community. Despite Kmara's claim to have risen as a grass roots movement, it is apparent that NGO mentors pulled it along the way. Disturbingly, while Kmara activists say they are peacefully mobilizing the population for the elections, some hot-headed NGO representatives, such as [] insist to us that Kmara embodies the spirit and will of the imminent "revolution." Most of Kmara's leadership now have jobs and interests of their own. Although these former students represent the fresh young face of Kmara, NGO leaders with close ties to opposition parties supply much of the agenda. Rather than pulling the students' strings, NGO representatives advise and initiate activity as friends of Kmara. Continued financial support from these NGOs to Kmara may further subordinate Kmara's leadership to NGO leaders who publicly identify with Kmara, including the [] U.S. policymakers should be aware of potential fallout from the GoG in reaction to perceived linkages between U.S.-funded NGOs and Kmara activities.

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11. (C) Comment continued. Kmara activists seem sincere and idealistic in their ambition to stimulate political dissent in Georgia. However, Kmara is largely the creation of closely-affiliated NGO leaders, who see it as a vehicle for rebellion against the Shevardnadze Government. Kmara is not a resistance movement comparable to OTPOR in Serbia. Kmara aims to delegitimize the Government by public demonstrations, using tactics condemned as juvenile

by some, and which are rare in Georgian political

discourse. Kmara represents the best and worst of the opposition: idealistic zeal with the proclivity and will to destabilize the political climate before November. Kmara will remain vulnerable to NGO steering if it does not establish its own leadership and platform. Similarly, unmeasured actions by Kmara activists could tarnish Kmara's image among Georgian society at large. While sensational GoG allegations and police confrontations might increase the small numbers of Kmara activists, many Georgians will not support rash actions by Kmara which threaten a constructive and stable approach to democratic elections. End comment.

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